

REMARKS

The present invention provides a compact wall-mountable data outlet that brings packet-based network data connectivity closer to a user, enabling multiple user-equipment connections to the network, without requiring multiple connections to a centralized network device (such as a server or router) to support each equipment connection. The intelligence needed to forward data packets (*cf.*, "link-layer connectivity") is provided by data outlet's "bridge circuitry", making unnecessary the multiple connections typical of prior art network installations. To better serve such purpose, the data outlet is configured physically to separate its equipment-interfaces from its premises-interface, thus enabling the mounting of the device in or on a wall.

Twelve claims are pending. Product claim 63 is the sole independent claim. Claims 7, 13-14, 16-21, and 33-34 all ultimately depend on claim 63. All stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. §§ 103.

Applicants request reconsideration.

In particular, in response to the prior non-Final office action, it was argued that the examiner's key cited art reference -- the "Binder reference" -- failed to disclose applicants "bridge circuitry". The argument was found persuasive. The examiner acknowledged that "Binder fails to clearly teach the bridge circuit providing data packet transfer between said user interface and premise interface circuitry".

With the earlier rejections based on the Binder reference declared "moot", the examiner in the present office action now relies upon U.S. Pat. No. 5,722,976 (the "Sakabe reference") to supply the missing "bridge circuitry" teaching.

Each of the examiner's obviousness rejections were reviewed. All rely on the Sakabe reference. All argue that:

Sakabe teaches [bridge circuitry features] in figure 3, elements of LAN unit including coder 71, decoder 72, modulator 60, demodulator 64, etc., col. 5, line 30 - col.6, line 4; and for the phone unit 42, a channel coded 124, as shown in figure 8 operating as a bridge, see col.7, line 15 - col.8, line 9 for purposes of providing packet transmission services to user equipment.

Applicants disagree. The passages and figures referenced by the examiner **do not** disclose or suggest "bridge circuitry". While they certainly teach circuits, and while these circuits are used for telecommunications, they are not applicants' network "bridge circuitry".

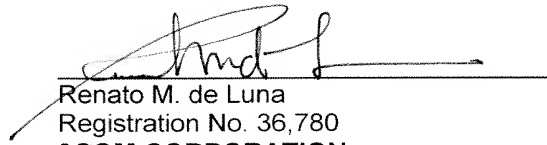
Those skilled in the art will understand with particularity the scope of the term "bridge circuitry", particularly in light of applicants' detailed description at page 5, line 20 *et seq.*, which is consistent with network bridge definitions and standards under IEEE 802.1d. Applicants appreciate the breadth in which examiner's are required to construe claim terminology. But there is no doubt here. Applicants' terms are to be construed in the context of applicants' specification in light the understanding of those skilled in the art. As such, applicants' terminology, in its present form, without further amendment, sufficiently and clearly encompasses network bridges involved in the forwarding of digitized data packets, not the analog signal circuitry that the examiner points to in the Sakabe reference. The lines are clear.

Inasmuch as the examiner's central argument is quite clearly unsupported, all of examiner rejections are without grounds. Withdrawal of the rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 103 of all claims is requested.

Conclusion

The pending claims define subject matter neither described nor suggested by the cited art references. Allowance – now felt long overdue -- is respectfully urged.

Respectfully submitted,



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Maureen Capozzi, IP Paralegal
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